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contents

<i>Solitude</i>	2		
<i>First Kiss</i>	3		
<i>The Artic</i>	4		
<i>1st Corinthians 1:18</i>	5		
<i>All in a Days Work</i>	9		
<i>Sixteen</i>	10		
<i>Embrace</i>	11		
<i>My Un Perfect World</i>	12		
<i>Arrogant as Sapphires</i>	13		
<i>Hope</i>	14		
<i>Trashcan</i>	16		
<i>Looking Into the Past</i>	17		
<i>An Attic Box</i>	18		
<i>Sticky Stuff</i>	19		
<i>Cake and Ice Cream</i>	20		
<i>Past and Present</i>	21		
<i>The Cycle</i>	24		
<i>Temptation</i>	25		
<i>The Closet We Share</i>	26		
<i>I Do Wear Black</i>	27		
<i>Salem</i>	28		
<i>Black</i>	29		
		30	<i>Ever Wonder</i>
		31	<i>Night Song of a Flute</i>
		32	<i>Untitled</i>
		34	<i>Freedom</i>
		35	<i>Sick</i>
		36	<i>Sanity Saving Thunderstorm</i>
		38	<i>Home</i>
		39	<i>One Hour to Bloom</i>
		40	<i>6:50 am</i>
		41	<i>Untitled Metaphor</i>
		42	<i>It Makes No Sense</i>
		43	<i>The Sock Story</i>
		47	<i>A Sparrows Sonnet</i>
		48	<i>I Am What I Am</i>
		49	<i>My Kamil Moment</i>
		51	<i>Worry</i>
		53	<i>The Sermon from the Mount</i>
		54	<i>Neighborhood Beach</i>
		55	<i>Tears at Sand Creek</i>
		56	<i>What I See</i>
		57	<i>Genders</i>

Poetry Second Prize Winner

solitude

Joelle Williams

Alone in twilight's thickening grasp,
I hear the crickets start to sing.
The wind's a rustle in the grass.
Solitude's a funny thing.

Three dim stars appear out there,
And like a planetary ring,
An untouched jet trail spans the sky.
Solitude's a funny thing.

And if the darkness comes too soon,
At least there's slumber in its wing.
Until the foothills drown the moon,
Solitude's a funny thing.

Floating in a cobalt night,
We wait for what the day will bring.
Evening sets my heart alight.
Solitude's a funny thing.

first kiss

Rene Mathis

I've never felt that way
before.

I've never felt that way
since.

Your affection was new.

My fondness was old.

Your presence was calm.

My thoughts were stormy.

You leaned in slow.

My heart beat fast.

Your eyes were closed.

My eyes were open.

Your lips felt warm.

My hands felt cold.

You, a charming boy.

Me, a romantic girl.

We are grown up now,

We've changed since then.

You forget.

I remember.

I've never felt that way before.

I've never felt that way since.

the artic

The air was crisp..a light shone shyly through a cracked door.
Shadows played across his face..
Everything looks beautiful in soft light.
The mars and embarrassments are not seen..only bright green
eyes and a hint of excitement.
Fingertips like fire trace circles into bare skin.
Searing their mark..forever etched.
Locked into each other's souls..nothing can shake the stare of
longing.
Bonded together by uncertainty but unwavering emotion..he
holds her.
No longer are the worries of her soul haunting her..but a warm,
giddy feeling replaces fear.
Like a soft blanket enveloping her soul..his fingertips run
down her body.
Electricity is certain.
"I am looking forward to this.." he murmured into her ear...
So am I.. So, am.. I...

1st corinthians 1:18

Ashlee Chism

I can just imagine what they said,
Back before the Flood:
“You’re a fool, old man! What is this rain?
You’ve preached for a hundred and twenty—
Don’t you think you’ve preached in vain?”
They mocked and they laughed—a good time all around—
And they all drowned.

I can just imagine what they said,
Before the fires fell:
“You’re a fool, Lot! Why do you even care?
Your God won’t destroy us! Why would He even dare?”
They mocked and they laughed—no one listened, no one learned—
And they all burned.

I can just imagine what they said,
Right after his arrest:
“What a fool! To turn down what he did! He wasn’t too smart!
‘A crime against his God’? Why say that at the start?”
They mocked and they laughed—the laughter long and loud—
And they all bowed.

I can just imagine what they said,
As his window opened towards heaven:
“He’s a fool! Hasn’t he heard the decrees?
Isn’t this what we knew? That he’d be on his knees?”
They mocked and they laughed—they thought he was beaten—
And they were all eaten.

I can just imagine what they said,
As He hung on a tree between earth and heaven:
“You’re a fool! Take Yourself down, if You’re what You say!
Now we’re rid of this usurper—now we’ve had our way.”
They mocked and they laughed—they thought He had lost—
But, to save us, dying was the cost.

I can just imagine what they will say:
“You’re all fools! You’ve waited so long—why keep up the long wait?
He tarries! You will die—you all know your fate.”
They’ll mock and they’ll laugh—they’ll think they have won—
But, Jesus is coming, and He’s God’s own Son—
And they will all run.



-Rebecca Wong



-Eric Rose



-Rebecca Wong



-Eric Rose



-Eric Rose



-Eric Rose

all in a days work

Looking back in history at the industrial age through the eyes of an unappreciative young whippersnapper who takes what he has for granted.

Tom Stone

A mystery of history: the industrial age,
Speedy progress of production at home set the stage.

Advanced in a craft with the vision of teamwork
Clang, whirl, zoom, zip, tink, vroom; just like clockwork.

The big boss sets the pace of the “big boom” mission
Workers from all continent set into position.

‘Affordable, fun, speedy, and needed’
Advertisements were made while the employees pleaded:

The big man’s interest in the bang of economic consumption
Overlooked the little man’s crazy drive to dysfunction.

“Work harder and faster for half the pay
Or we’ll give your job to another” you would hear them say.

The standardized brutality of the emotionless superiors
Finally forced the almost robotic workers to seize the interiors.

Furious of the regiments from the massive hand
A buzzing revolution spread across the land.

“We need a union” was shouted with discontent.
Finally added was that much needed supplement.

The work place today is much better in review
With all that we could want and much more than that too.

sixteen

Elena Acosta

I don't want to go back
To being sixteen.
It was so overrated,
Like your ugly skater jeans.

Those days when I pined
And longed for your affection
Have long since been cured
Like a stubborn infection.

Those nights when I cried
I barely remember.
As fresh in mind
As when we met that September.

I don't remember your smile
Or the way you made me laugh.
I don't remember your jokes
Or the times we cut class.

Maybe I do remember
I must confess.
How pitiful I was
The day you left.

But time has healed.
My heart can now breathe.
There's no way I would go back
To being sixteen.

embrace

Kristin Thomas

“No! Put me down!” I shriek laughingly. Smiling, you acquiesce and my feet are on the ground again. It’s not something that happens often, but when it does I feel a need to object. I’m not sure why. Part of me loves it when I go to hug you and am unexpectedly whisked off my feet and spun around in an embrace.

One day I thought about why it is that I am compelled to object to this particular display of affection, and I realized why. I love it when you pick me up and spin me around because I can sense your love and somehow it makes me feel protected; I am made aware of your strength. The only reason I object is because I don’t want you to know how heavy I am. When you pick me up, there is no way for me to hide anything because you are holding me.

I think I do the same thing with God. So very often I find myself being caught up in His embrace as He lifts me off the ground and holds me tight. He makes me feel loved, and I experience the strength of His sufficiency. I know that while He is holding me, nothing can overcome me; I am completely safe and wholly loved. But still I object. When He is holding me above the world, He knows the full weight of my sin. He knows my failings and my weaknesses. I love it when He picks me up, and yet my pride and shame object. According to my request, He lovingly places me back on my own feet, though I am sure He wishes I would let Him hold me again.

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’” *2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV*

my un perfect world

Rene Mathis

In an unperfect world I would unmake my bed.
I would wear high heels for house slippers.
And house slippers to work instead.
In an unperfect world I would unfold my laundry.
I would scatter it all about my room,
And make the place a quandary.
In an unperfect world I would unwash my dishes.
I would stack them high in the sink,
And run out to catch some fishes.
In an unperfect world I would unvacuum my floors.
I would let dirt accumulate,
And grow plants in all my drawers.

arrogant as sapphires

Tina Poole

Sparkling,
Blue –
His eyes.
Gorgeous,
He knows.
Soulless
And cold.

hope

Melissa Faifer

It's been two years, has it? It still hurts. I can try my best to ignore the pain and fill my life with things so I forget to feel it, but it still hurts.

"It's not mutual," I say, "It's unrequited." I'm as far gone from that mind as the east is from the west.

"But what about that one time?" That little voice gnaws at my heart.

"No." I say. "It was just a formality. It was just to be nice."

"What about all of those other times?"

I shake my head and tell Hope to go play on the highway. She falls silent.

So why does it still hurt? Why have I struggled with it for so long? Maybe it was because there was never any closure. All it would have taken was a simple, "no," yet I wasn't even fortunate enough to receive that. I think about demanding one—a "no" that would silence Hope for good. Then she would never make me unhappy again. Then she'd leave me alone and I wouldn't have to forever wonder what could have been.

"What am I, a 9th grader?" I growl as I dismiss the thought.

Why do I need a concrete, audible answer? I've asked so many times, verbally and nonverbally, why should I need to hear it? Why should I lay my pathetic, bleeding heart on the table when I know it's useless? It's because of Hope. I glare at her as I brew over this troubling thought. She just doesn't get it. She doesn't understand when over is over. She can't see that I have no other choice but to move on.

"But that song! The words were for you!" She cries, unable to hold back any longer.

"No they weren't." I mutter, still deep in thought.

"The poem!" She insists.

"You're looking for things that aren't there," I say, bothered by her obvious naiveté.

"But Doubt. . . ."

She's desperate now.

"Why are you still here?" I sharply ask. "Will you never leave me alone? Will you not stop until I'm completely shattered and unsatisfied? What IS it with you?!"

I'm beginning to hate her now. Her eyes are filled with glittering tears. I turn away, because I can't stand to watch her cry. Goodness, I'm not THAT heartless.

"But Doubt, why won't you just believe?!" The innocence in her voice nearly penetrates my icy armor.

"Look, Hope, it's not that simple. I really wish it was, but it's not. I'm obviously the only one feeling this way. Love gives a choice, right? So the choice isn't mine. The power to change things doesn't lie in my hands, but in the hands of some one else. And until something changes, I can't believe you."

"But what if he doesn't know?" Hope is just miserable.

I'm nearly crying now, but I keep my back to her so she won't see. There's no point in arguing with her any more—she'll never understand. It's not her fault. She just wasn't programmed to understand things like this.

"Look Hope, you're all right and everything, but I really can't be around you right now. It only makes me feel worse. So I'm leaving now, and please don't follow me," I say as I walk away.

I can hear her heart-wrenching sobs as I distance myself from her, but I can't go back. It's for her own good, as well as mine. Maybe someday I'll see her again, but for now I need to say goodbye to my life-long companion. I guess we just weren't meant to stay together. *-Melissa Faifer*

trashcan

Rene Mathis

I'm tired of the way you treat me.
I feel just like your trashcan.
Your forced tears fall as you tell me how much I mean to you.
However, I can't help but notice how you place me in a corner
And try to keep me there—weighted down—full to the brim
With your fake smiles, and all-about-you stories.
I'm forgotten, unless there is burden you want me to bear,
Or I somehow steal your limelight.
I'm self-conscious of the embittered stench
That permeates my opinion of you.
I try to bury how burnt I feel.
Yet, every time I trust you again,
I become crammed full of crumpled up,
Backstabbing quotes you've thrown at me.
How do I know what's true,
When I'm just your trashcan full of garbage?
It is hard to uncover the truth when you're searching through trash.

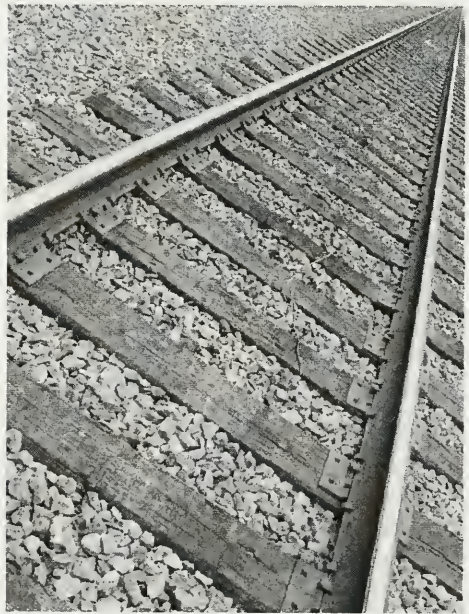
looking into the past

Tina Poole

Memories from far away times
Beckoned with delight.
Quiet moments slowly disappearing
Slipping reluctantly into the night.

Promises that could not be kept
A destination yet to reach
Traveling the passages of life
With thousands of faces yet to teach.

Illusions left from times of merriment
Gathering cheerfully in our hearts
Broken years go by in flourishes
Then to graves we must depart.



-Eric Rose

an attic box

Rachel Lovelace

A scruffy old Steiff teddy bear—
matted fur and missing an ear.

A well-loved porcelain doll—
missing a thumb.

A wooden polar bear toy from a Noah's Ark—
a gift from a long ago Christmas.

A spirited little bay mare—carved
by an old man who once took care of carriage horses.

A scuffed copy of Hamlet.

A crumbling rose— carefully laid
in a small box, a deep green ribbon about its stem.

A leather bound diary from 1915—
inside a sepia photograph of a smiling
young woman and her dead fiancé before he went to war.

sticky stuff

Kristin Thomas

Another class period was dragging by. The hands on the clock were ever so slowly making their rounds. Our teacher told us to get out an assignment we had completed because we were going to share our thoughts with a classmate. As I pulled my computer out and set it on my desk to retrieve the homework, my forearm rested in an unpleasant film on the small wooden desktop attached to my chair. I jerked my arm away from the sticky substance faster than Superman can change his clothes. “Gross! What on earth is that?” I exclaimed in my quiet classroom voice. Note to self: keep arm away from desk.

My discussion with one of my classmates continued with no more extraordinary events, and the class period continued to creep toward lunchtime. My mind wandered as I repositioned myself. I set my elbow on the desk to rest my chin in my hand, but quickly abandoned the position the second my elbow contacted the desk. Blagh. I didn’t know what it was that I kept putting my arm in, but it was sticky and it was gross.

After what seemed like hours, class was dismissed and I left the offensive syrupy desk to agitate some other poor soul; but the molasses-like substance stuck in my mind throughout the day. I couldn’t help but think about that sick sticky stuff on the desk and how much it reminded me of sin. Sin is sticky stuff, and every time we come into contact with it, our immediate response should be to recoil in disgust. Our snapshot of sin should be one taken through the lens of Christ. If this were the image in our minds of sin, we would see it for what it truly is—a repulsive film that covers us with uncleanness.

Sadly, we don’t often see sin that way, and even when we do, we sometimes dabble in it unintentionally, repeatedly sticking our hands in it without thinking. Just as the syrupy film on my desk was offensive to me, so is sin offensive to God. Sin defiles the character of God, and if we want to have an intimate relationship with God, we need to remove the sticky stuff from the desktops of our lives. Fortunately, we know the One who can clean our hearts from the inside out.

“They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God.” Ezekiel 37:23, NIV

cake and ice cream

Elena Acosta

You are like cake and ice cream;
I smile when I think of you,
I taste the sweetness of your smell when I see you.

But I know something is missing
When I don't hear from you on my birthday.

past and present

Tina Poole

A new found love,
Plagued with doubt.
Even as they stand together,
Past loss fills their minds.

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave him.

His wife was the picture of health,
Or so they thought.
Then in an instant,
The diagnosis of cancer shattered everything.

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave him.

She thought it couldn't get worse
When they got the news.
Her husband was being deployed to Iraq,
And he'd be gone for a year.

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave him.

He watched his beautiful wife
Fight for her life.
In her mind she fought to survive,
But her body withered away.

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave him.

When two soldiers arrived at her door,
Her world stopped with their message.
He only had two months left to serve,
How could he be dead?

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave him.

His wife lost her battle
Only six months after it began.
Surrounded by family and friends,
He said goodbye and lowered her into the ground.

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave him.

Her husband was buried with full honors.
Soldiers stood in formation saluting his passing.
The flag was folded and as she received it,
His body was lowered into the ground.

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave his.

When he lost his wife,
He never thought he would love again.
But, when he met Sophia,
His sleeping soul was stirred.

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave him.

She felt lost and cold when her husband died.
She thought her heart was locked,
Like a safe that couldn't be cracked.
But like a thief, Jared broke through.

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave him.

Sophia's so different from his wife.
Rich black hair instead of blonde, deep brown eyes instead of blue,
Feisty instead of tame, polar opposites in many ways,
But surprisingly he found her incredibly attractive.

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave him.

Jared's definitely not like her husband.
Blond floppy hair, definitely not military cut,
Easy tempered instead of fiery and outspoken.
So different, yet surprisingly to her so attractive.

His eyes never leave her.
Her eyes never leave him.

Together they stand, not realizing they have the same fear,
That their hearts could be broken again.
But as they stand, eyes locked they realize,
Intentionally or not, their hearts are already united.



-Eric Rose

the cycle

Elena Acosta

The high of your flattery—so warm.
The warmth of your kiss—so sweet.
The sweetness of your words—so easy.
The ease of my affection—so deceiving.
The deceit in my eyes—so convincing.
The way I convinced you that you loved me—so high.



-Rebecca Wong

temptation

Tina Poole

Living a life of poetry,
Lingering in the beautiful night,
The sky filled with brilliant constellations
And her, waiting in the silvery light.

His tender whisper in the moonlight,
His promise of love and adventure,
Giving in to temptation with promises on her mind.
Then waking to the sunlight,
Where her sweetheart has left her behind.



-Eric Rose

the closet we share

Rene Mathis

“This half of the closet is mine,” you say.

“Collared shirts with collared shirts

T-shirts with t-shirts

All the shades of blue together

All the shades of green together,

Etcetera.”

I see everything neatly on hangers

Each in their specified place.

At the bottom are structured rows of shoes

Dress shoes, tennis shoes, red shoes, new shoes,

Organized fitting neatly in the space.

My eyes move from the rainbow your shirts create,

To the tornado mine generate.

The helter sketler mess of entangled hangers

Imprisons my clothes making it ALMOST

Impossible to free them.

A bouldering mountain of garments

Capped with a snowy white t-shirt

burys my mismatched shoes.

The condition of our clothes is as contrasting

As our personalities.

I look at you, smile, and say,

“I’ll clean it up.”

[i do wear black]

Elena Acosta

I do wear black
On skinny days
On pretty days
 It accentuates.
 It baits.

I do wear black
 On friendly days
 On bubbly days.
 To interact.
 To impact.

I do wear black
 On fat days
On bloated days
 To minimize.
 To less despise.

I do wear black
 On sad days
 On lonely days
 It hides.
 It lies.

saalem

Melissa Faijer

What happens to a love expired?
Does it melt away
like a snowman by fireside?
Or vanish like a nymph--
and then hide?
Does it smell like moldy stew?
Or stick and scab over--
like imprisoning glue?
Maybe it just sinks
like a shipwrecked boat.
Or does it still float?

black

Kristin Thomas

Black is dark and black is quite sinister—
Not often thought of well by those who minister
To victims of evil, with broken hearts.

Black describes the days that we are apart.
When I draw away from Your presence the tears start
To fall, for that's what paints me black as night.

Black coats my heart and my soul when I fight,
With my will against Yours my self blocks out the Light
Of the world, who's coming in glory.

Black is the page of evil's history,
But God has promised to change black with the story
Of redemption. He will transform black soon.

Black's existence is not merely for ruin;
It is black night's sky that accentuates the moon
That reflects the light of life-giving sun.

Black Earth's a chance to magnify the One
Whose light and love were made manifest by the Son
Of God—our Redeemer who makes us white.

ever wonder

Joelle Williams

I see you in the cornfield
You're playing your guitar
You nod your head and wonder
If Heaven's very far

I see you on the subway
Crowded, far from home
You hold on tight and wonder
If you are so alone

I see you in the morning
You wish you weren't awake
You rub your eyes and wonder
How much a guy can take

I see you in the streetlight
We hear the distant thunder
We hope we're not the only ones
We close our eyes and wonder

Poetry First Prize Winner

night song of a flute

Kristin Thomas

Silence falls, a soft blanket 'round about me.
Light tiptoes out of sight, quietly closing the door behind it.
Stillness encircles me, slowly pressing inward.
I wait.

The world is hushed, no busy noises ringing;
Every ear asleep, all vibrations cease.
A small breeze sweeps through me.
I stifle sound.

No beams of light illuminate the room,
The darkness muffles all about.
My shining silver here can hide,
Muted by dark.

Motions of tickling fingers are stilled.
No movement will now disturb
The peace and deadened stillness.
My keys tingle.

Now, in quiet undisturbed night
Devoid of glaring lights and bustle,
I lift my voice, my melody—
I sing.

untitled

Megan Elmendorf

The
Sky is ablaze with pleasant color.
Beautiful
Petals fall like raindrops in a gentle wind.
Women
Dance like fairies- dashing, twirling, swaying.
In
River currents, the light reflects like diamonds scattered on the riverbed.
Elysian
Is unmistakable in its soft, golden glow.
With
Turquoise and violet hues streaking in ribbons across the sky.
Soft
Flowers float on the Lethe like miniature vessels.
Caresses
Journey on the slothful, sweet breeze.
Warm
Sunrays kiss blooming branches.
The
Clean air tastes of life as it skips across the land.
Heart-
Beats proudly proclaim prominence.
But
Giant trees, straddling the river like proud warriors, dwarf all.
On
Oceanus, waves are tender and small.
The
Willowy branches dip into the watery depths.
True
Warmth is neither too warm nor too cool but perfect.
Ambition
Is clear, honest, and proper.
Under
Purple clouds burning with pink fire,

Elysian fields
Blossom with lilacs and poplars.
A
Song of bliss echoes across rolling, green hills.
Powerful
Trees line the rivers' edge.
Enchantment
And charm abundantly roam.
Clouds
Of various shapes race across an azure sky.
The
Mountains will always melt into sweet spring.
Mind
And body are content in all things



-Rebecca Wong

freedom

Kristin Thomas

My life's begun to change again,
The restlessness is gone.
The days of selfish pestilence
Erased with this new dawn.

I'm free from your command.

You grasp at my heart, but in vain—
This time I will not yield.
My heart is out of reach, for now
The sword of Christ I wield.

You must go now.

Farewell, adieu. Be on your way.
I pity your sad fate;
For you were once the shining star
That lighted heaven's gate.

What now, you ask?

I'll flood this vacant residence,
This heart that you once filled,
With holy, selfless love of God.
My future He will build.

Today begins my freedom, tomorrow holds only joy.

sick

Enchantment.

Rapture.

Music flows like silk, softly touching my ears.

The sheets feel smooth around my body...

A haven for the weary...

A cough racks.

A fever soars.

Sweat beads on my forehead.

Release.

Escaping from this wretched weakness is no easy task.

Laying in bed...I swallow my remedies..

Hoping to Escape.

sanity saving thunderstorm

I sit in my room.

Another night of tedious word reading, painful memorizing and dreadful writing.

I sometimes find it difficult to keep from screaming. I crave to bury my head into my pillow and expel every emotion until my voice is scratched and my body limp.

Yet, here I am... pain exploding from my brain, eyes red and bloodshot.

Sometimes, when it seems that I may just have to grab that pillow...

Something is brewing...

I took a moment to shift my attention from my slowly leaking sanity filled room, through the window out in the inky blackness of the night.

I start to see cold, cool tiny drops falling.

Slowly at first...

nothing too noticeable..more like a mist.

The earth is quiet and the ground moist with drops.

But ever so slightly..this mist starts to multiply itself until tear size drops are no longer left.

but it is as through a bucket has been turned upside down;

water is rushing forth out of the sky as fast as gravity will let it fall.

A waterfall has taken a hold of the earth.

Nothing will stand in its way.

The extreme force of the rain beats down trees and pummels the concrete.

It creates a sheet of invisibility and I am forced to stop and recognize this awesome power of nature.

Along with the waterfall...

Sound.

A deafening, ground shaking, goose bump raising sound.

Thunder.

My indulgence.

My secret love affair.

Thunder.

He is never consistent and almost always leaves to quickly.

But I wait for him, every time I see the drops start to fall.

I am eager for his return.

He is unpredictable.
He excites, but never lets down.
Every moment he is here, there is passion and a hint of danger.
Adventure.
He moves in slowly, then crescendos, announcing his presence to all.
And slowly, he moves away, delighting another one of his lovers.
I can never fully devote myself to this one love.
For, you see, he has a companion much greater than I will ever hope to be.
Electric. Bright.
Dominating the sky with her brilliance.
She completes him in a way that no other force could.
She has many names to me: beautiful. dangerous. exotic. mysterious.
But, most know her as Lightening.
She goes wherever he does.
They are inseparable.
They are nothing without each other.
My sanity was slowly leaking away...
But I was once again caught up in the romance of rain. It didn't matter that my head was pounding..
that I have responsibilities..
that my eyes are so heavy that its even hard to write this..
I found my saving grace..
I found my romance..
I found my sanity saving thunderstorm.



home

I was
Broken and bleeding,
And though I didn't know it,
You were the remedy I needed.
You were
Constant and committed,
And though I knew it,
We were divided by emotions.
We were
Torn and tortured,
And though I didn't want it,
There was only one way out.
But you
Came after me
So there could be a "we."
And now,
We are
Delighted and devoted,
And though I can't believe it,
You are more persistent than ever.
You are
Poised and patient,
And though I can believe it,
I'm amazed by God's solution.
I am
Sheltered and secure,
And though I didn't expect it,
I'm finally at home with you.
Now I
Am after you,
Because your home is in "we" too.

one hour to bloom

Tina Poole

Slowly my dark purple petals begin to open
And I gaze into the brilliant blue sky.
Softly I'm pushed by the warm breeze
First one way and then another.

I have one hour to watch the world go by –
I'll listen to birds sing and chipmunks chatter.
I'll let the sun bathe me in her warmth,
So as my dark purple petals begin to close
I'll embrace that warmth to get me through to next year.

6:50 am

Jasmine Saxon

I bundled my body with a scarf, a knitted cap and a wool button up sweater. 6:50 a.m. and I was on my way to the outside world. As I stepped into the early dawn, I saw nothing that reminded me of morning. The sky was blacker still with small pinpoints of shining light. The air wrapped his long crisp fingers around my form. My nose immediately felt his cold breath and turned a slight rosy color. My cheeks were next and suddenly, I was transformed. I was not an average college student attending an early morning review at 7:00 a.m. I was beautiful with my blushing cheeks and pinkish nose. I was vivacious with labored breathing from climbing four flights of stairs. I was an adventurer braving the black, cloudy, frozen morning. I was a romantic..staring at the sky. The moon barely covered by a vast mass of cloud. The stars forming Orion, the Earth silent.

Silence. A beautiful moment right before the clamor of the day begins. Silence, before light's first blush. The street lamps cast a delicate, warm glow onto the sidewalks but its stony surface was desolate. The only sign of life was a delivery truck announcing its presence with a beeping backup. My feet padded by without notice.

This Silence left me alone to wonder. It was invigorating. Yet, It made me feel exciting and hopeless. For I knew daybreak would soon come, and along with it, a cacophony of sounds. I found peace in this unknown Silence.

I found a freedom never experienced in this Silence. A freedom to be alone. To relish the words echoing in my own head. A freedom to be alive and vibrant with cold cheeks and loud breathing. I was shameless.

I could yell at the top of my voice, whisper quietly to the trees, dance in circles down the walk, or merely stand still and feel. No one could take this early morning freedom away from me.

As I step into the warm hallway filled with voices, the enchantment of my dawn is lost.

This silent frigid morning that grants my weary soul a temporary freedom has vanished. Too often I am trapped inside myself by life's mundane bustle. Again, I wait for the silence, craving my freedom.

untitled metaphor

Ashlee Chism

The church is not a country club--

It is the center of education,

Where students come to learn and to do,

A place where it's safe to question,

And to think, and to gain wisdom.

It's the seat at the Master Teacher's feet--

But not a country club.

It is where the community gathers,

Where people come to talk and to play,

A place where it's safe to be who one is,

And to laugh, and to finally live.

It's the party at the Heavenly Father's house--

But not a country club.

It is the finest free hospital,

Where the wounded come to be healed and to be fed,

A place where it's safe to admit to one's pains,

And to one's vulnerabilities, and to one's faults.

It's the exam room of the Great Physician--

But not a country club.

It is the field operations headquarters,

Where soldiers come to rest and to regroup,

A place where it's safe to learn how to conquer,

And to receive missions, and to simply just go.

It is the base of the Commander of the LORD's army--

But not a country club.

it makes no sense

Pauline Sfalanga

It's like being afraid to put your feet on the ground,
Being afraid the ground will some how disappear,
You see the ground there below you.
You know it's not going anywhere,
But you just won't step down.

It makes no sense

It's like being afraid to take a hand that's helping you up,
Being afraid the hand won't be there when you reach,
You see the hand outstretched to you,
You know they want to help you up,
But you just won't take their hand.

It makes no sense

It's like being afraid to cry on some ones shoulder,
Being afraid they will push you away,
They want you to cry on them,
They reach out their arms to hold you,
But you just won't lean on them.

It makes no sense

It really is me being afraid to trust him,
Being afraid he will hurt me like the rest,
I know he's not going anywhere,
I know he would never hurt me,
But I just won't trust him.

It makes no sense

Short Story First Prize Winner

the sock story

Joelle Williams

I had been hearing about the wonders of the sock-man since he had moved into town the summer I was fourteen. My clinging friend, Sydney, had been the first to come to school with two of his special socks on her feet the first day back from vacation. "Look what I have!" she had shrieked excitedly to me, shoving her smelly old left sneaker in my face. This time, for once, I didn't catch its putrid odor.

I was crouched in front of my locker, trying to find the notebook I needed for class. "What? What is it? Um, all right, Sydney, what's with the rainbow socks?"

"These are super socks! Guess what, Colette? They're ALIVE!"

I stood up and looked at her incredulously. "Yeah, those colors sure are... they're practically crawling up your legs. They don't even match"

One sock was striped in rainbow colors and the other was a garish red and purple with rainbow dots.

Sydney looked hurt. "They really are alive, like your gerbil or my brother."

I made a face and clutched my books closer against my chest, staring at those fuzzy socks. When I didn't say anything, she continued, "They know exactly what you want to be like and they help you just become that way."

"That's uberfreaky," I said, giving her a strange look. "You feeling okay today?"

Sydney grinned struck a pose. "Notice anything different about me?"

I shook my head. "You're a little tanner than when summer started."

She framed her face with her hands. I gave a halfhearted smile and shrugged.

"It's the ACNE, baby!" she howled suddenly, walking away in exasperation. "It's GONE like yo momma!"

Later, I spotted her standing in the midst of a group of girls who would never have given her a second look before. She had pulled up her pantleg and was showing them her dorky socks. "AND my waist is two inches smaller. And I went up a cup size. I'm getting taller, too!"

"You look like a model!" one of the girls breathed.

"These are my new lucky socks," Sydney proclaimed. "Good girls!" she crooned, and bent down and stroked them.

The other girls gave each other unsettled looks.

So ugly duckling Sydney was growing up (in body if not in mind). Big deal!

Sydney was the first drop in a great wave.

She had only had the socks a month that September day. By Christmas, none of us would have recognized her had we not seen the gradual transformation. She had gone in less than six months from a pimply, awkward freshman into the school beauty queen. The boys were falling all over themselves to please her. She was not to be alone for long, however. By that time several of the popular girls were trying out super socks of their own. The price of the socks inflated with their popularity and ballooned beyond what any self-respecting teenager would pay for even the best piece of popular technology. Some socks had paisley patterns, others were checkered, argyle, plaid or polka-dotted, and some were just random, vague colors, bright or bland, and they never quite matched. I hated the look of them, especially because I could never afford them. It was not without mixed feelings that I pretended to ignore the beautiful people sprouting like sunflowers in the hallways, as I pressed my books tighter to my chest like a shield, walking past them all, resolute and silent.

By my junior year, I went to school in a sea of perfect faces. The boys had jumped onto the proverbial bandwagon as soon as they realized that the odd footwear could make them buffer, taller, and more appealing to the ladies, who were increasingly desirable themselves. Even the teachers were starting to look younger and fitter, and many adults in our small town also sported the socks. I saw the mayor once when he visited our school and he could have passed as a college guy, although the man had to be over fifty. Sometimes our biology teacher took his socks off in class and let them crawl around on his desk. Several girls at school were never satisfied with their perfection and over months continued to evolve into different superstar look-alikes. I had considered myself naturally pretty before the whole sock episode began, but now I was a thorn among roses and was shunned with a group of other poor, white-socked "uglies." That year I finally persuaded my parents to let me get a job, since I had found one in walking distance from our home. I worked like a dog for the rest of the year and throughout most of the summer, but had still saved little over half the amount needed to buy a pair of those stupid, miracle-working socks. I decided to contact the sock-man anyway. More than anything, I was desperate to be as beautiful as everyone else my senior year, and I wanted friends again.

I called the sock-man, nearly in tears, and asked him what I could get for

the amount I had.

"I'll tell you what," the friendly but husky voice answered. "I don't normally do this, but come on over anyway with what you have. Make sure you bring your oldest, most well-worn shoes. Actually, only bring one. I can't give you two socks for so little. I'll see your shoe, and I'll raise you one sock. You'll be able to pick it up the next week."

The location of the sock-man's home was common knowledge. I walked there myself one hot summer day. The dwelling was at least fifty years old, a low, grey, one-story deal with small, white-framed windows and a newly refurbished but empty carport. Although the house was fixed up as nicely as an old house could be, it was not the towering mansion such a great inventor would be expected to own. Especially one who charged such exorbitant prices for his creations. I could have bought a used car with the money I was spending on this. I rang the doorbell, a little nervous.

The door opened and the first thing I saw was the top of a bald, age-mottled head ringed with a few floating white hairs. The stooped, wrinkly man craned his neck and looked up at me with an ancient smile, then shuffled past me and ambled down the steps. "Follow me around back, if you would," he said. "You're a pretty one to be wanting a sock, though." "Not very pretty anymore," I replied, but I don't think he heard me. I clutched the bag holding my old shoe and walked after him. I wondered why he didn't use his own invention to make himself appear young again.

He led me around the side of the house and opened a gate in a low picket fence. I stepped inside after him. Small animals swarmed towards us out of a shed and jumped around the man's ankles. They could have been ferrets from the way they moved through the grass with a rapid, bouncing, slithery motion, but they were rather unnaturally colored. Then I realized that they were socks. The old fellow picked a yellow and green one up and it quivered in his hand. "This little guy is just getting old enough. It will be the parent sock," he announced, with a proud smile. "Now, please, show us your shoe."

Fumbling a bit, I dug my frayed Converse sneaker out of its plastic bag and presented to the man. He took it from me and held it up to the sock that was in his other palm. It dove into the sneaker and appeared to be moving about inside like a curious weasel.

I made a face. "It really is alive."

The sock-man smiled indulgently. "I call them socks, but they are really a new kind of creature. This one is assimilating your DNA so when it

produces the next generation the offspring will be perfectly fitted for you. It is even capturing your personality and usual emotions from the chemicals in the old sweat inside your shoe.”

“Disgusting!” I exclaimed.

“Perhaps,” he chuckled with an involuntary twitch of his saggy right eyelid, “but very advanced, if I do say so myself.”

My transformation from bore into beauty took a little longer than that of most of my classmates, but by our senior class trip I was running with the best of them. I was a sultry brunette beauty with a Barbie body and a deadly smile. We stood outside our hotel in Chicago ravishing passers-by with our mere glances, or so we believed. I had the time of my life.

Nobody knew what happened to the sock-man. One day not long after my graduation he just disappeared. His neighbors said he was beginning to become fidgety over all of the media attention his socks were garnering. Those who had super socks were glad they already did, and all the younger siblings and slowpokes who hadn’t gotten socks yet were furious and jealous.

My beautiful schoolmates eventually grew up and dispersed. When I was twenty-one, my sock died. It ceased to move when I took it off one night and although I continued to wear it for some time my looks faded back to ordinary. At our ten-year class reunion, we recognized faces we hadn’t seen since we were underclassmen. All of our socks had passed away and left us with the looks we had almost forgotten. There was one blonde bombshell who still looked amazing. I assumed it was plastic surgery. She looked similar at our twenty-year reunion, however, and had a shy but equally handsome husband. Everyone began to suspect, but she wouldn’t talk.

-Joelle Williams

a sparrows sonnet

Melissa Faifer

I am a golden eagle, but by name
They call me Madam Sparrow, bird of grace.
I hide my heart, pretending to be tame,
Lest my inherent sin become disgrace.
My sparrow's eye is trained to seek out seeds,
My feathers are a frame that I must fill.
Around I hop, obscuring my misdeeds,
And weaving secret lies with expert skill.
Yet eagle instinct longs to feed on flesh,
So I my brother strike and leave for dead.
With steely talons others I enmesh,
Then bid them blame the guiltless owl instead.
My fellow birds have fallen for my bait,
But He who knows my heart I can't escape.



-Eric Rose

i am what i am

Tina Poole

I am what I am.
Don't ask me for more.
I'll love you faithfully,
But if you ever cheat –
Nevermore.

Nevermore will I trust you
Or call you my friend.
Nevermore will I let
Your charm take me in.

I am what I am.
Don't ask me for more.
If you are faithful
And treat me right –
Forevermore.

Forevermore I will love you
And stay by your side.
Forevermore I will follow you
Until the end of our time.

my kamil moment

Suzanne Ocsai

“I’m going to have a “Kamil Moment” today!” I exclaimed excitedly to my canvassing leader, referring to the experience of a young Czech canvasser named Kamil Metz.

Kamil had set a goal of 16 books for a particular day but hadn’t been able to get any out after running into countless experiences where people couldn’t find their money. Finally he stood on the porch of his last door and was met by a lady that invited him into the living room where she and her husband were sitting. ‘Thank you, Lord. This is it.’ He thought to himself as he began making friends with the couple. Soon they had seen all his books and were very interested. At last the lady pulled out her check book and handed him the long awaited payment. When he walked out their door that evening sixteen books had found a home accomplishing his goal. But, even more than that, Kamil had had an awesome experience where he knew God was leading and guiding in his work. And that day I just knew God would reveal Himself to me in a similar way.

When getting only two books out all day, my leader felt impressed to drop me off on a street where there was a small strip of apartments. When she told me this my anticipation began to grow. What was God going to do? As I walked along the rejections only continued; however, countered by my growing excitement they were simply fuel to its great flame. Going to each door at the apartment complex I could sense God’s presence surrounding me. My joy overflowed and I began to sing, “God will make a way where there seems to be no way....” Before I knew it I found myself at what appeared to be the last door. A man in his early thirties stood at the entrance. He seemed open and we made friends easily, as I showed him the books he took each one and flipped through them looking carefully at the pages then handed them back politely appearing suddenly detached from interest. ‘This is not a good sign,’ I thought to myself. When we got to the end I asked,

“So, which one’s did you like best?”

With that he reached out took them all back making a pile on his table with ones he wanted. I was shocked! ‘Wow, this is just like what they tell you will happen in training!’ I thought while observing his action. As I wrote up the receipt I saw that out of the four books he’d chosen, three were message books. Nothing could have been better.

As I look back on that day I realize that though my “Kamil Moment” was

smaller in size than Mr. Metz', my walk and experience with Christ was still great in importance to Him. Every step of the way I knew that He was leading and that something awesome would happen. And, that's exactly what happened. I'm reminded of how the bible tells us that God knows the desires of our hearts and longs to give them to us if we will first seek Him. Let's seek God today and experience our own "Kamil Moment" with Him.



-Rebecca Wong

worry

Rachel Lovelace

A black ribbon, silky, smooth,
slithers from my fingers to wrist
constricts.

I cut it in two, but they hit the floor
dancing, mocking, tripping me.
Frustrated, I catch the wriggling ribbons.
Fibers pop under my finger nails,
as I tear them to pieces.

The ribbons catch my ankles and wrists
like strings on a marionette,
they twist and pull me until I am tangled.
Desperate, I rip them from my body.
I burn them.

But now their ashes smoke of their taunts.
So, I seal them in a jar
and shove the jar on the farthest shelf of my mind.
I go through the day, free from them . . .
or so I thought.

But I can't put the jar from thoughts.
I crave its contents:
taunts . . .
speculations. . .
fears . . .

I need to feel the jar in my hands
. . . opening the jar . . .
disgusted—shove it back on the shelf . . .
Open the jar . . . close jar . . .
open . . . close . . .

So, I carry it day and night to end the cycle.
My arm aches with its weight—heavy speculations.
Frustrated with my sick need for it, I throw the jar down
. . . it shatters . . .
ashes on the floor . . .
on my jeans . . . on my hands
in my eyes . . . in my mouth . . .

stuck in my tears
Resigned—I reach for a new jar, a new ribbon,
new lies, new speculations, new fears . . .
ready to let them strangle me . . .
a scarred hand stops me:
“Give me your jar, I’ll carry it.”
“But I can’t give it up, I need it.”
“Yes you can, give me you jar, I’ll carry it.”
So, I give Him the jar.



-Rebecca Wong

the sermon from the mount

Elena Acosta

“Oh honey let me tell you, in nineteen thirty fo’,
We didn’t have no big cameras,
Only big church doors.

There weren’t no loud films or video tapes,
There was only the black preacher,
Shoutin good ole grace.

We didn’t waste our precious time starin at no screen
We only had those pretty windows of Jesus
Lookin sad and healing the unclean.

There weren’t no pop songs sung by plastic lookin people,
There was only gospel singin
About the blood, the cross, and the steeple.

Youngin let me tell you, these is sneaky times.
Don’t let that devil getchyou
While you still in yo’ prime.”

neighborhood beach

It is a warm day, the first in a long time.

I walk down to my small neighborhood beach.

An old gnarled tree reaches its thick fingers
across the paved road.

The shore is lined with rocks, reeds and trash.

As I stand by the rotting pier I see phantoms
from days long past:

Myself as a young girl, my hair reaching my waist,
bangs touching my eyebrows, climbing
on the rocks at the water line.

I fall and scrape my knee.

I see my sister and I playing with Barbies
and plastic ponies in the sand.

I see in a summer long past, swimming
in the brown water with a friend I ceased
talking to when I was thirteen.

I see myself as a young teen leaning
against a tree, looking at the gray water
through a blur of tears.

Today is a warm day, the first in a long time.

I walk to the beach and gaze at the glassy water
and phantoms from the days when life wasn't so complicated.

tears at sand creek

Tina Poole

Women's and children's screams pierce the air
Even though there were no warriors in sight,
Still the white soldiers let their bullets fly,
Not caring that it was not right.

As the Great Mother Earth
Accepts their bodies into the ground,
Her tears fill the sky and her cries fly on the wind,
While her sadness darkens the sun, no solace could be found.



what i see

Looking at my love

Tom Stone

(A poem through the eyes of a volcanologist)
It's an oozy doozy of bubbling blobs
Anxiously waiting with gooey globs.

Perilous, menacing, and downright unsafe.
Restlessly rising and threatening our space.

Eagerly brooding, and lurking in the back.
Rumbling and grumbling; a giant smokestack.

Tephra and ashes, awaken with a boom!
Intrusive gases spew into the room!

Frantically fleeing from fiery fumes
While wildly watching what it subsumes.

Endlessly emerging from the hazardous hill
Spewing and seeping; it's time for the adventurous thrill!

genders

Melissa Faifer

Old,
Plain,
Black –
My dress.
Ugly,
I said.
Dark chocolate
And licorice
He thought.
Useless fretting.



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